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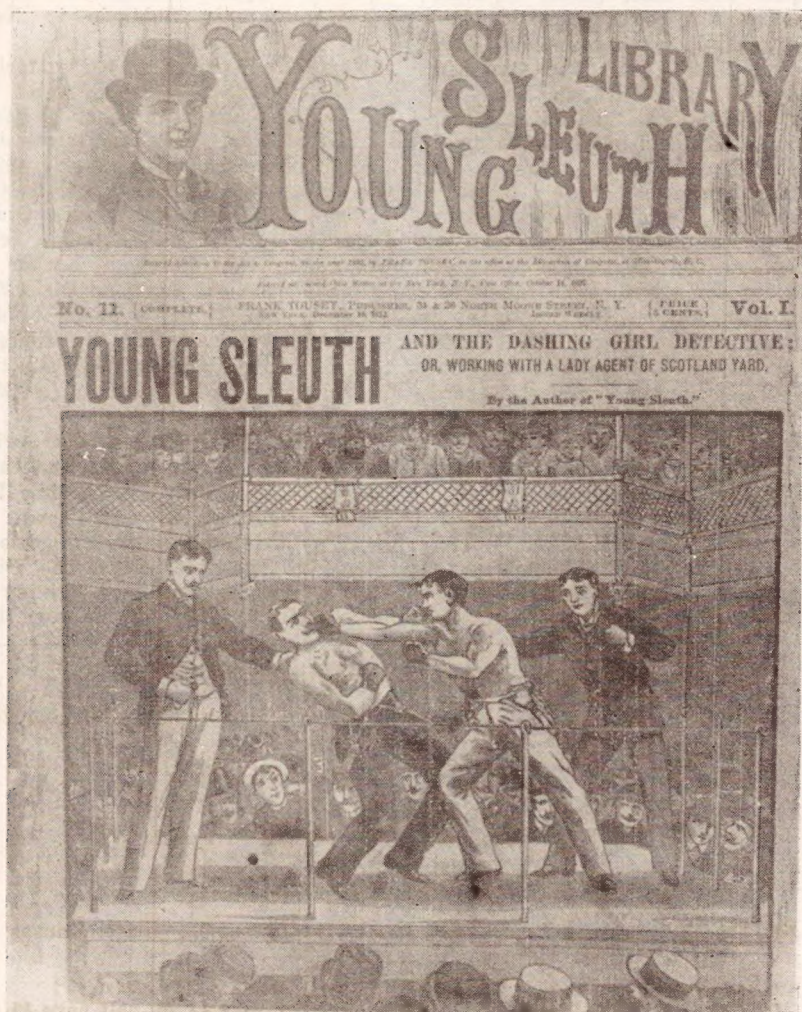
DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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BOY DETECTIVES

PART I

By J. Edward Leithead

Looking back to the heyday of Beadle & Adams and other dime novel publishers before the colored cover novels replaced the black-and-whites, it is apparent that at one time boy detectives were almost as plentiful as boy heroes of the Wild West. A few youthful sleuths were heard from after the turn of the century, but their popularity had waned. They couldn't compete with those giants of detective literature whose exploits were aimed mainly at entertaining adult readers, Nick Carter and Old King Brady—no, nor Harrison Keith nor Dick Dobbs (who had all the earmarks of growing to giant stature if Dick Dobbs Detective Weekly had lasted longer).

Probably I should include among these master adult detectives, Old Cap Collier and Old Sleuth, for both were certainly long-lived, and the Westbrook reprint series, Old Sleuth Weekly, ran to 203 numbers, 1908 to 1912. Old Broadbrim in colored covers didn't do so well, running 51 issues. Regarding Young Broadbrim, his successor, more later on. Sheridan Keene of Shield Weekly failed to attract much attention, either—22 issues, not all of them about Keene.

Among the earliest of adult detectives to appear in dime novels was, I suppose, Joe Phenix, the Police Spy (Beadle's Dime Library #79), by Al-

bert W. Aiken. Old Sleuth, creation of H. P. Halsey and published by George Munro, was another early one. Aiken wrote of Joe Phenix again in Beadle's Dime #112, Joe Phenix, Private Detective, and followed these two up with at least 21 additional Phenix stories. Author Harold Payne penned a series for Beadle's Dime about Detective Thad Burr, and for the same publication Captain Howard Holmes (T. C. Harbaugh) produced the Captain Coldgrip stories—Captain Coldgrip, or, The New York Spotter (#400), Captain Coldgrip's Nerve (#407), Captain Goldgrip in New York (#413) and so on.

Next in number of detective stories written for Beadle's Dime seems to be Jackson Knox, with about 30 titles—Hawk Heron, the Falcon Detective (#386), The Circus Detective (#462), Old Falcon, the Thunderbolt Detective (#509), Wellborn, the Upper Crust Detective (#595) to mention a few. George C. Jenks (later the author of so many excellent Diamond Dicks for Street & Smith) did a bunch of detective tales—Death-Grip, the Tenderfoot Detective (#526), Wild Pete, the Broncho Buster Detective (#755), etc.

But this article has to deal principally with boy detectives, and they flourished in Beadle's Half Dime Library. Probably the best-known of these youthful sleuths was Deadwood Dick, Jr. The elder Deadwood Dick was a good-badman type, mixing a little road agency on his own ac-

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count with the hunting down of frontier outlaws, but the son can hardly be said to have followed exactly in his footsteps. He was all over the United States, fighting crime. As nearly as I can figure, there were 33 Deadwood Dick stories and 97 Deadwood Dick, Jr. stories—I may have missed a few. Anyway, you don't often see it mentioned that there was a Deadwood Dick tale in Beadle's Boy's Library (large size), #21, Deadwood Dick as a Boy, or, Why Wild Ned Harris, the New England Farm Lad, Became the Western Prince of the Road. This would up the number of Deadwood Dick novels to 34.

The author, of course, was Edward L. Wheeler, who wrote all the other tales of "The Black Rider of the Black Hills." And Wheeler was as good a writer of detective yarns as he was of Western tales, something that cannot be said of most authors as I know from my own writing experience. While it's possible for most to introduce a little mystery into a Western tale, a good detective yarn has a technique that all writers of Westerns can't master. W. Bert Foster was one of the few who could write both equally well.

The Beadle & Adams output, except for Wheeler's Deadwood Dick, Jrs. and some others by him, including Denver Doll, the Detective Queen and the whole series about her, was not on the same high plane of detective literature as, for instance, Street & Smith's "Nick Carters" and Frank Tousey's "Old King Bradys." The younger Deadwood Dick first appeared in Beadle's Half Dime #443, Deadwood Dick, Jr., or, The Sign of the Crimson Crescent. He knocked about the West, tracking criminals, for some 19 issues, one of them being Deadwood Dick, Jr., the Wild West Vidocq, or, Leonora, the Locator (#544)—M. Vidocq, of course, was the renowned French crime investigator whose name became a synonym for "detective," and Old Cap. Collier Library devoted at least one issue to his adventures, #14, Vidocq, the French Detective.



In #554, Deadwood Dick, Jr. turns up in Gotham to solve a mystery, in #561 he goes to Boston on a "cool case", heads for Philadelphia in #567, Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Philadelphia, or, The Wild West Detective Among the Crooks, backtracks to Chicago in #572. After tackling a case in Denver in #584, against "Cool Kate, the Queen of Crooks," stopping off at Purgatory Pass in #590 and Beelzebub Basin in #595, he comes East again in #600, Deadwood Dick, Jr. at Coney Island, or, The "Piping" of Polly Pilgrim. He turns West briefly in #606, Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Leadville Lay, takes a trip to Detroit in #612 and to Cincinnati in #618. West again in #624 and #630, rounding up counterfeiters in #636, Deadwood Dick, Jr. After the Queer, or Sawdust Sam's Last Green Game, then to Buffalo in #642, to solve the mystery of "4-11-44." Then it's Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Chase Across the Continent, or, A Race for a Ruthless Rogue in #648, and two rounds with criminals in San Francisco in #710 and #716. Right afterward, he heads north in #722, Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Dominoes, or, The Rival Camps of the Northern Border. He got around quite a bit, did this young Western

detective, and it was all good reading to accompany him.

I'm not sure in what issue Deadwood Dick, Jr. took to himself a wife—Kodak Kate—but perhaps it was #710, Deadwood Dick, Jr. in San Francisco, or, Kodak Kate, the Snap Shot. At any rate, she shared many of his adventures, and some of the advertising, as witness this announcement of a forthcoming issue:

"Next Half-Dime, No. 845

Another Glorious Take-'em-in!

Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s High Horse;

or,

The Sport Queens of Hard Knocks

By Edward L. Wheeler

"A sensation 'way up in the air, in which His Satanic Majesty, on a wire rope strung between two mountain peaks, plays a marvelous role.

"A Mining Camp Mortal Mystery, in which two beautiful but desperate women—rival sport queens—come to a vengeful reckoning.

"A new device for the Great Detective Prince and his daring wife, Kodak Kate, which they together work to a decidedly surprising ending.

"All-in-all a story of enthralling interest, unequaled novelty of incident, and characters that no place but the true Wild West can produce.

"Don't Fail to Secure It Promptly!"

Before me is a copy of Beadle's Half-Dime Library #770, Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Defeat, or, The Tandem Team's Thorny Trail (due to the kindness of Ralph Cummings, who has supplied me with several items needed in writing this article). Deadwood Dick, Jr., has hit the mining camp of Basalt Butte, to untangle a mystery, under trying circumstances. The horse ridden by his wife has run away, gone over a two hundred foot cliff above the mining camp. Its body is found below among the cabins, but no Kate. Miners tell Dick there was no rider with the horse when it struck. He stirs up the camp to an exhaustive search:

"I am a stranger here, as you see, the young man went on, 'and do not know the ground. I want you to go



ahead and make the search a thorough one. I will pay you for the work, besides the reward to the successful man. My wife must be found, dead or alive. Do you hear me? She must be found!"

"Everybody was talking at once, or trying to, and there was almost confusion, but now a cheer was given, and more than half the crowd dispersed to go in quest of the mysteriously-missing woman. If she was to be found they meant to find her, and each was eager to be the successful one, in order to secure the liberal reward.

"By ther way, stranger,' now remarked the mayor of the camp, 'we haven't got yer handle yet. S'pose ye let us know who ye are, what yer business is, and what et was brought ye here.'

"Under the circumstances I will tell you who I am,' was the response. 'My name is Richard Bristol, though I am better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior. You—'

"Deadwood Dick?"

"Yes; Deadwood Dick, Junior. You may have heard of me—I infer that you have. Do you now doubt my story, mayor? For once I am baffled. Here is a mystery without a single

clew, and one that strikes home. Where is my brave, bonny Kate?"

The search for Kodak Kate proves fruitless.

"Entering the Silver Bugle, Deadwood Dick threw himself upon a chair by a table and bowed his head upon his arms. The redoubtable Richard was almost crushed. Fearless in the face of foes, as intrepid as a lion when in danger, this great loss of a loved and loving wife, together with the awful mystery, was more than he could bear . . . Even the business that had brought him to this camp of Basalt Butte was for the time being entirely out of mind."

It seems that the husband-and-wife detective team was a popular idea in bygone days as well as the present, for this issue is dated April 26, 1892.

Next in importance to the Deadwood Dick, Jr., detective series was the Broadway Billy series in Half-Dime Library. The author of them was J. C. Cowdrick, and the first of the series #490, Broadway Billy, the Bootblack Bravo, or, Brought to Bay by a Bold Boy. #491 was Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Compact, so, from here on, the two youthful detectives started a race for popularity. Billy seems to have held his own very well. He appeared in #514, Broadway Billy's Boodle, or, Clearing Up a Strange Case, #536, Broadway Billy's "Diffikilty," or, Old Rodman's Millions, #557, Broadway Billy's Death Rack-et, or, The Street Sleuth's Wake, #579, The Chimney Spy, or, Broadway Billy's Surprise Party, #605, William O' Broadway, or, The Boy Detective's Big Inning, #628, Broadway Billy's Dead Act, or, The League of Seven.

Unlike the Westerner, Deadwood Dick, Jr., Billy was a New York street gamin detective, at first in the bootblack business around Broadway of an earlier day, but later acquiring an office and two assistants, Happy Harry and Silent Seth. Billy's surname was Weston, and his activities were not always within the canyon walls of New York City. He was in 'Frisco in #669 and #675, Texas in #696, Santa Fe in #711, Denver in #753.

A startling case of murder occurs

in #844, Broadway Billy's Big Bulge, or, Running In the Life Insurance Conspirators, from which I quote (two thunderstorms clash over New York City, lightning bolts strike, "live" electric wires are down everywhere, people blown flat on the sidewalk by the tempest, horses and vehicles in confusion): "On this night, Detective William Weston—Broadway Billy—hero of a hundred adventures, was abroad and it happened that he was in that part of the city where the storm and havoc were worst experienced.

"He had been braving it all, home-ward bound, till he discovered the cyclone almost upon him, when he sprang to the shelter of a deep doorway just in time to escape its embrace; but even there he had to cling closely in order not to be drawn out by the powerful suction.

"The cyclone having passed, the natural wind of the storm seemed like a calm in comparison, and Billy looked out from his place of shelter upon the terrible scene of which attempted descriptions have been offered . . . Several horses were down, and quite a number of men, two or three of whom were dead, beyond question . . . (Billy) noted a man coming up the street, walking almost leisurely, as though himself were king of the elements . . . From walking he sprang suddenly into a run, leaving the sidewalk and darting out into the street.

"Naturally, Billy's eyes left him for a second to learn what was the object of his sudden change and his chase, and they rested upon a younger man who was carefully picking his way amidst the awful confusion.

"Billy's first thought was that the two men were friends, and that the stranger of the beard was running to join the other, but he was speedily and terribly undeceived. He of the beard stooped suddenly, caught up one of the writhing, hissing wires, and leaping forward, thrust its spark-tipped end against the back of the young man's head.

"Broadway Billy was struck with horror at the assassin act.

"The man dropped instantly to the ground, lifeless, while the stranger, dropping the wire, started to run from the scene of the heinous deed."

But Broadway Billy, though he gave immediate chase, didn't catch the murderer that night, for this was but the opening chapter of the novel. Billy stepped on a live wire and next found himself on a hospital cot. Nor was this the last of Broadway Billy's adventures in the Half-Dime Library.

T. C. Harbaugh, noted for his Western and historical tales, also had many boy detective stories to his credit in Beadle's Half-Dime—#418, Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter, or, The Gold Gang of New York, #470, The Boy Shadow, or, Felix Fox's Hunt for the Nabob, and a long series about Dodger Dick—#512, Dodger Dick, the Wharf-Spy, #521, Dodger Dick's Best Dodge, #538, Dodger Dick, the Dock Ferret, #543, Dodger Dick's Double, or, The Rival Boy Detectives, etc. It may be a little difficult to think of Col. Prentiss Ingraham penning stories of boy detectives, but he did some for Half-Dime Library—#450, Wizard Will, the Wonder-Worker, or, The Boy Ferret of New York, #454, Wizard Will's Street Scouts, or, The Boy Detectives' League, #474, Flora, the Flower Girl, or, Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.

These youngsters with a bent for sleuthing popped up in various localities and avocations. There was Sam Slabsides, the Beggar Boy Detective, or, The Blind Man's Vengeance, by Edward L. Wheeler (#426), Fred Flyer, the Bounding Boy of the Star, or, The Reporter Detective, by Charles Morris (#428), Kit Fox, the Border Boy Detective, or, The Brand-Burner's Daughter, by Joseph E. Badger, Jr. (#449), Hotspur Bob, the Street Boy Detective, or, The Mayor of Canyon City, by Jo Pierce (#452), Surly Sim, the Young Ferryman Detective, or, The Black Bluffs Mystery, by Jo Pierce (#494), Jack Jagers, the Butcher Boy Detective, by Jo Pierce (#509), Jerry Flicker, the Stable Boy Detective, or, The Lively Racket in Jericho, by Jo Pierce (#541), Harlem Jack, The Office Boy

Detective, or, The Cousin's Crime, by Jo Pierce (#559).

This is by no means a complete list of "boy detective" stories in Beadle's Half-Dime, but let's pass on to another black-and-white publication, Munro's Old Cap. Collier Library. No pay-dirt here, they don't seem to have favored kids as man-hunters, unless Young Dillon, the Detective (#2), Young Ironclad, the Keen Detective (#24) and Young Weasel (#134) are some of the lads we're looking for; plenty of oldsters, though, besides Old Cap Collier himself—Old Thunderbolt, Old Tabaret, Old Dynamite, Old Cap Ruggles, Old Gold-Eye, Old Hawkeye, Old Broadbrim, Old Sledge, Old Neverfail, Old Spicer, Old Saddle Bags, Old Rafferty, etc.

There's the same dearth of boy sleuths in Munro's Old Sleuth Library (with the exception of The Boy Detective (#65), Young Thrashall (#86), Young Velvet, the Magic Disguise Detective (#91), and a similar parade of old-timers—Old Sleuth, first and foremost, Old Terrible, Old Puritan, Old Ironsides and so on. In some cases, of course, these detectives were not actually old in years, it was merely a nickname.

Ostendorff's Bob Brooks Library and Tousey's great New York Detective Library also apparently skipped tales of the more youthful crime detectors, although I haven't a complete list of the latter publication to check against. The bright particular star of New York Detective Library was, of course, that splendid creation of Francis Worcester Doughty's—Old King Brady. There was a good long list of Old King Brady stories in that library—#154, Old King Brady, the Detective, #157, Old King Brady's Triumph, #162, Old King Brady's Great Reward, #168, Showing the Queer, #177, Old King Brady in Australia, #187, Old King Brady and the Scotland Yard Detective, #191, Two Flights of Stairs, just to mention a few—before, with Young King Brady as his partner (and, in course of time, with Alice Montgomery added to the Brady Detective Bureau of Union Square, New York),

he entered the pages of Secret Service, which ran for 726 issues, then was reprinted, totalling 1374 issues before the weekly folded in May 1925. Exploits of the James Boys were featured in New York Detective and Old King Brady appeared in some of these stories, but I'll reserve this material for a later article on Western outlaws in dime novels.

Young Sleuth Library, as the title indicates, was a series about a younger "gumshoe" as (police parlance once had it). Published by Tousey, very good both as to story and black-and-white cover illustration. Lu Senarens wrote many of them, the weekly running to 193 issues. There were some interesting titles in the list:

#20—Young Sleuth in the House of Phantoms; or, Fighting Fire With Fire. #23—Young Sleuth and the Wolves of the Bowery; or, Beating the Badgers' Game. #28—Young Sleuth and the Race Course Plotters; or, How the Dark Horse Came in First. #29—Young Sleuth's Chicago Trick; or, Working as Three Men At One Time. #36—Young Sleuth's Great Circus Case; or, Bareback Bill's Last

Act. #43—Young Sleuth in the "Lava Beds" of New York; or, The Tenderloin District by Night. #45—Young Sleuth and the Bryant Park Mystery; or, The Queen of the Queer in New York. #52—Young Sleuth and the Opera House Mystery; or, Murdered Behind the Scenes. #60—Young Sleuth and the Murder at the Masked Ball; or, Fighting the League of the Seven Demons. (Title reminds you of one of Nick Carter's famous cases, Dazaar, the Arch Fiend, or, The House of the Seven Devils).

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